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## Heartfelt Community Showcased in Steel Magnolias

Posted on [September 28, 2013](#) by [admin](#)



the ladies at truvy's

Robert Harling's 1987 play *Steel Magnolias* has been almost entirely eclipsed in our collective consciousness by the 1989 Herbert Ross film of the same name starring Shirley MacLaine, Dolly Parton, Sally Field and Julia Roberts. When characters have become so culturally iconic it can be a challenge to bring them back to the stage, but [Theatre Arts Guild](#) does just that in their heartfelt production that plays at the Pond Playhouse Theatre until October 5<sup>th</sup>.

The story unfolds in the beauty parlour of Truvy Jones in a small town in Louisiana and centres on a series of clashes between Shelby, a headstrong young girl whose diabetes causes her chronic and serious health risks, and her mother, M'Lynn, who is concerned that Shelby is too careless about her health in her desire to do exactly as she wishes with no compromise. Throughout the play six strong women become intrinsically linked to one another and the older women are each profoundly changed by Shelby's influence and zest for life.

Where Nick Jupp's production really shines is in the intense and intimate moments of conflict. The scene in the Second Act where M'Lynn and Shelby reveal an important secret to the ladies of the beauty parlour has perfect dramatic and emotional pacing and

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a strong use of silence. Harling's play has the potential to veer toward the melodramatic and Jupp wisely steers his actors toward a more subtle sense of realism. His cast capture much of the vivid personalities and big hearts of these six Southern belles. Caroline Khoury Smith is delightfully awkward as Annelle, the lost young woman who oscillates from one extreme to another in attempt to find herself. Michele Moore has great stage presence and comic sensibility as the cutting cranky dame Ouiser, Charmaine Alma captures a great sense of Southern decorum and affluence for Clairee, the former mayor's widow. Britney Canzi is a sweet fire cracker as Shelby and Diane Hawco captures M'Lynn's deep devotion to her daughter and her struggle to maintain a balance between smothering and respecting her daughter's individuality. Debora Pollock's Truvy's roots the play nicely in a sense of small town community and warmhearted Southern hospitality.

I think Jupp has a perfect handling on the intensity and the darkness of the Second Act of the play, but that there is room for the First Act to be lighter and to push the humour, especially the absurdity surrounding Shelby's wedding, to even further extremes. If the play begins joyously and full of fun, it becomes even more emotional for the audience to watch Shelby's dramatic journey as it careens off the tracks.

I found myself becoming misty at the end of this production of *Steel Magnolias*, even though I was familiar with the story, because the cast committed so beautifully to the rallying spirit of kindness and kinship that this play celebrates.

**Theatre Arts Guild's *Steel Magnolias* plays at the Pond Playhouse (6 Parkhill Road) until October 5th, 2013. General admission tickets are \$16. Admission for seniors, students and TAG members is \$13. Tickets can be purchased at participating Atlantic Superstores, the Metro Centre box office, at the door (subject to availability), on the phone (902) 451-1221, through [www.ticketatlantic.com](http://www.ticketatlantic.com), and at self-serve express kiosks located at Metro Centre South Promenade and Casino Nova Scotia. For more information, please visit [this website](#).**

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Show Summary



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